Max Sartin

The representative system and the anarchist ideal

Introduction

Starting with the origins of the people's assembly, as a means of conveying the interests of the monarch and those of the subjects, this booklet outlines the career and function of political representation, by means of which the bourgeoisie seeks to maintain its privilege by giving it to the people the illusion of participation. Max Sartin, who was the editor of the Italian-language newspaper "L'Adunata dei Reffattari" from New York for more than 50 years, not only arrives at the demonstration of fraud in the representative system of modern democracies, but concludes, logically, that the method of Delegation and representation as well as in anarchist organizations can only be harmful to the For if the autonomy and the direct action of individuals, associated with free agreements, are to be the foundation of the society of the future in which we aspire, then, from today, we must reaffirm these principles in our propaganda, action and organizational activities and realize.

It is this basic and carefully set message that we would like to suggest to this text in its first German translation to all those who wish to deepen their understanding not only of democratic rule but also of the question of organization among anarchists.

Zurich, October 15, 2015

The representative system

The representative system is a political makeshift by which the bourgeoisie seeks to realize the principle of popular sovereignty without renouncing its privileges as a ruling class.

The idea of popular sovereignty managed, in its modern meaning, to prevail as a result of the revolutions of the eighteenth century. Before that lay sovereignty in the monarch, in the noble and theocratic castes, which they held and exercised out of the law of conquest, of inheritance, or of brute force.

When the insurgent third estate overthrew the power of the aristocracy and destroyed by the decapitation of the king the myth of the divine appointment of the monarchs, the bourgeoisie, inheriting the riches which had belonged to the masters of the old regime, sought a system which it would allow her to legalize the privileges which she secured, above all, thanks to the insurrectionary action of the people, and to justify the exercise of political power, without which she could not have long maintained the monopoly over those riches.

It found this system by inserting into the idea of popular sovereignty the idea of popular representation, by which the sovereign people transfers the functions of power to a staff elected for more or less long periods, but in any case belonging to the bourgeois class.

The idea of representation is independent of the idea of popular sovereignty and has different origins. While this emerged in the Crucible of the Revolution, that came in the thickest darkness of the Middle Ages.

"The idea of the people's representatives - writes Jean-Jacques Rousseau (of *the Social* Contract , Book III, chapter 15) - is modern: we have them from the feudal government, this unjust and absurd government, degraded in the human race, and where the name man is dishonored. In the ancient republics, and even in the monarchies, the people never had representatives; one did not know that word at all. It is very peculiar that in Rome, where the tribunes were so sanctified, they did not even imagine that they could usurp the functions of the people, and that in the midst of such a large crowd they never tried, even a single plebiscite on their own to pass over. [...] Among the Greeks, the people did everything they had to do themselves; it was constantly gathered in the square. "

Thus the Greeks conceived democracy not only as sovereignty, but also as the direct government of the people, something which did not cause unsolvable problems because, since the democratic republics of Greece were based on the slave economy, only the free people were citizens and formed the people which was liberated from the necessity of material labor exercised by the slaves and had all time to devote to the public cause.

Modern democracy is different. The emancipation from slavery and bondage slowly raised all people to the dignity of citizens, while creating a numerical problem that did not exist in antiquity.

But the representative system developed independently of this problem. Even before the emancipated slaves aspired to the dignity of citizens, the monarchs felt the need to give them the illusion of participating in the public cause. A French anarchist from the beginning of this century, O. Dubois, wrote in this regard: "The representative system was something unknown to ancient civilizations. Its origins date back to the Dark Ages of the Middle Ages, when Christianity and feudalism shared the leadership of the people. The situation of the "villagers" became unbearable at times, and they delegated theirs to show the gentleman the list of their complaints. These poor pariahs then personified, before the absolute and divine right, the miserable existence of the ruled plebeian. That was the first people's representative, England was her cradle. Once their mission was over, this miserable delegation dissolved; and one does not know exactly from what dark action of the centuries it has transformed itself into the powerful parliamentary assemblies of today. "(*Cronaca Sovversiva* , Barre, Vt. 7 October 1905).

So, for example, would anyone imagine that the delegations of the villagers, in those distant times of royal absolutism, had spontaneous origins. It is more likely that the dissatisfied villagers resorted to the revolt than to the petition to the sovereign by means of consensually elected representatives who expose themselves to lose their heads if the sovereign considers their audacity unbearable.

The archives of the English monarchy contain documentation of modest and democratic origins of the representative system. For example, there is a decree of King Henry III dating back to 1254.

The nobles - the secular and spiritual lords - still sit in parliament today, personally and rightly in the parliament, where they represent themselves and the class that they form together. With the document mentioned above, Henry III. the lords were to take their place in parliament, and, moreover, gave orders to the sheriffs of all the counties of the empire to cause two good and tactful knights to go before the king's council, which the people of the county make of it Purpose in lieu of all and each of them have chosen to consider, together with knights from other counties, what help they will grant the king. " *(The Encyclopedia Britannica,* keyword:" representation ").

Here already exists the existence of the representative system as a regime of economic and political privileges. It is not the villagers who take the initiative to send their representatives to the king; but it is the king who, by means of the sheriff, orders the dispatch of the representatives to the council, and he does not want them to be villagers, he stipulates that they should be "good and stately knights". The king wants the estates that are favored to have the consensus of the people's representatives, but the sheriff should make sure that those representatives are decent, that is,

devoted to the king. In other words, the king does not care that the representatives elected by the counties represent the people of the counties themselves; he worries that they represent the interests of the king.

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The pretense of political representation already shines through in this old document. In today's generalization of the representative system, the names change, but the substance is the same. The sovereign people elect their representatives, but his representatives are said to be good and stately knights of Henry III. of England - above all, to be good citizens, loyal to the legal order, that is, respectfully the right of private property, the capitalist monopolies of social wealth, the authority of the state, that is, they should not represent the will, aspirations or interests of those they choose, but the rule, the authority and the privileges, which consecrates and protects the legal order.

"The representative government - writes Peter Kropotkin - is a system developed by the middle classes to gain ground against the monarchical system, while at the same time maintaining and increasing their rule over the workers. But not even the most ardent admirers of this system have ever seriously claimed that a parliament or local authority actually represents a nation or city: the most intelligent among them understand very well that this is impossible. By championing the parliamentary government, the middle classes have simply tried to build a dam between themselves and the monarch, or between themselves and the landed aristocracy, without granting the people their freedom. It is obvious, however, that the more the people become aware of their interests and the multiplicity of those interests, the less proves to be the representative system. This is why the Democrats of all countries struggle to seek palliative or corrective which they can not find. They try the referendum and find out that it is not valid; they talk about proportional representation, representation of minorities and other utopias. In a word, they seek the impossible, that is, a kind of delegation representing the infinite variety of interests of a nation; but they are forced to admit that they are on a wrong path and confidence in the representative government is gradually dwindling. " *(Free Society,* Chicago, July 7, 1901).

The anarchists are not the only ones who criticize the representative system of government. In our time [1945] we have witnessed not only the criticism but the bloody offensive of the government absolutists, against the representative system, which almost succeeded in eradicating the achievements of the political revolution from the face of the earth, to the totalitarian absolutism of the monarchical and restore the oligarchic system of government. And it has not yet been said that there is nothing left of this offensive in the public life of future generations.

Political power has its roots in economic power and as long as it remains a monopoly of small omnipotent minorities, it is inevitable that it is utopian to hope for the triumph of a true democracy, in which the administration of the public cause is indeed the work of the people and benefit of the people themselves.

The representative system is, in the final analysis, a mechanism invented to liberate the governor, deprived of divine appointment, from the appearance of a popular institution. Those who are not content with the outward appearances and seek the substance of human relationships must necessarily object to the illusions of this mechanism.

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was certainly one of the founders of the democratic idea, is decidedly against the representative system. "Do you have to go to battle? - writes Rousseau - you [the citizens] pay troops and stay at home; do you have to go to the council? They appoint deputies and

stay at home. Through laziness and money, they finally have soldiers to subjugate the homeland, and representatives to sell it. "

"Sovereignty, Rousseau continues, can not be defended for the same reason that it can not be divested; it is essentially in the common will, and the will can not be represented: either it is the same or it is another; there is no middle-thing. People's representatives are not their representatives, nor can they be [...]. The English people think they are free; it is a great mistake, it is only during the election of members of parliament; Once these are chosen, it is slave, it is nothing. And in the use that he makes of it in the brief moments of his freedom, it is right for him to lose it. "(*Of the Social Contract* , Book III, chapter 15).

In Switzerland, where Rousseau's influence is greatest, the referendum is indeed more widely used than in any other democratic country; but as Kropotkin well observed, the referendum does not solve the problem of democracy. The people are called upon to comment on proposals formulated by small interest groups and special parties, it is up to them to say whether they approve or reject them, but they have no power to redesign these proposals; and, if adopted by the majority, the government is required to impose all its observance on it, including the opposing minorities, interpreting them with their particular criteria as a ruling group.

Carlo Pisacane, one of the pioneers of anarchism, considers the representative system to be absurd: "To explain that a government represents public opinion and public will, he writes, is the same thing as explaining that one part represents the whole. »

In the authoritarian socialist camp, the criticisms of the representative system made by Rittinghausen about a century ago are still valid today.

"The representative system - Rittinghausen writes in 1849 - is a remnant of the ancient feudal system, a remnant that would have fallen under the bumps of the first French Revolution. It had its raison d'être as the society was a composite of corporations of any kind, giving their deputies a specific mandate; today, as the corporations have disappeared, it has no reason to live anymore. With the spirit of the Middle Ages, with the cause, the people would have had to eliminate the effect. "

"National representation - Rittinghausen continues - is a pretense. The delegate represents only himself, because he votes according to his will and not according to the will of his mandataries. He may say "yes" if they say "no" and he will do so in most cases, so the representation does not exist unless you want the fact, the action, the interest and the opinion of them hurt, which one claims to represent, so call. »

But, as Rittinghausen goes on to say, "even if there were real representation by any untraceable Phoenix of MPs, the majority of the country's voters would never be represented, and almost half of the voters would vote for majority and opposition in the assemblies *Find the* situation. " *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Lynn, Mass., November 21, 1904).

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Rittinghausen was not an anarchist. He was a democratic socialist who wanted a state in which the legislation would be made directly by the people, rather than by means of impossible representative assemblies, impossible because the so-called representatives of the people actually only represent themselves there.

Anarchism rejects the idea of the state itself, and for three quarters of a century the anarchists have criticized the representative system and abstained from voting, for two fundamental reasons that are

generally accepted by all: namely, because the anarchists, since they have the Deny the state, do not want to participate in its activity by using its voice to nominate its legislators; and because they know that effective power lies in the hands of those small minorities that own and monopolize social wealth in all its forms, so that legislators not only represent not the majority of the people they choose, but in realities once they are free, according to their own conscience, if they have a conscience, to enact laws that deviate from the interests and will of the effective power of those privileged minorities.

In the societies we proclaim, there will be neither state nor economic monopolies nor privileges of any kind. The production and distribution work will be carried out by people who live under conditions of equality, on the basis of free agreement. Already in our groupings today, endeavoring, if only in embryonic form, to realize the anarchistic society in which we aspire, the Companions unite and work under the conditions of relative freedom that the environment allows, but that Forcing escapes from any authority, that is, under conditions of equality and self-serving motives.

Now, if the authority of man over man and the hegemony of economic and social privileges were the only reasons for the invalidity of the representative system, there would be nothing to oppose the fact that this system would be transferred to the anarchist society of the future This is not contradicted by the fact that even today the anarchists take over their group, propaganda and organizational activities, where these privileges have no roots.

Needless to say, the representative system is also widely used in the environments that call itself anarchist, especially where the anarchists unite in federations and unions, and even more so in the unions, where the anarchists to delegates or to be elected as such at congresses and meetings or even administrative functions and even publishing functions of a different nature.

However, this transplantation of the representative system is not without harm, and not without opposition.

For example, we have all seen how much damage the representations of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo in Spain, at the time of the anti-fascist battles of 1936-39, have inflicted on the cause of freedom in their country as well as the anarchist movement in general. At that time, the representative system, practiced by people who called themselves anarchists, acted as it does to all authoritarian parties. At one point in time, the alleged representatives of the Iberian libertarian proletariat took the initiative of a government policy absolutely opposed to the premises of anarchist doctrine, and without questioning their clients - even their protests, where occasion arose, in censorship and suffocating in the blood - they sent their men to hold ministerial posts and to solidarize with brutal repressions of the will of the people.

The international anarchist movement has still not paid off the consequences of this fateful perversion.

The absolutist reaction of Nazi fascism produced, as Malatesta foresaw, an increase in sympathy for the democratic regime. The struggle to overthrow Nazi fascism, a long, bloody and inevitably mixed struggle, has inevitably created a conflagration of arms, danger and disaffection between the fighters of the authoritarian democratic parties and the anarchist militants who have taken part in it will not be able to dissolve quickly after the fall of fascism. There will be democrats who will be anarchists through this brotherhood of arms, but there will certainly be anarchists, and there are those who tend to concede to democratic methods. Indeed, the news that comes to us daily from Europe says that there is a great deal of confusion in the ideas of the remnants of the insurrectionary struggle against Nazi fascism, and that the most pressing problem for the propaganda of the anarchist ideal is to accept the ideas clarified.

Anarchism is a young movement forced to operate in an authoritarian world. To live anarchistically in this environment is impossible. Many who agree with the goals that anarchism seeks to achieve have no very clear ideas about the method of getting there. And by the way, what the select anarchists do themselves does not necessarily correspond to anarchism simply because it is done by anarchists.

"Our actions - wrote Luigi Galleani - *are not necessarily* anarchist, because we who commit them are anarchists (no one would confess the property as an anarchist the moment he pays the taxes, rent or fines), but also conversely, the more our actions and our behavior correspond to our ideal, the more we are anarchists. " *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt. June 25, 1904).

So it is about knowing whether our actions are appropriate to the ideas we profess, and whether, in the case we are studying, the representative system can be accepted as a suitable method, both today and in our everyday relationships for propaganda and action, as well as tomorrow, in the functioning of society under anarchist regime.

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The representative system involves, in the first place, a delegation of thought, will and function; secondly, it brings with it the predominance of the majority, otherwise the representation would be immobilized by the opposition; and, ultimately, it brings with it the principle of collective responsibility.

The anarchism excludes in principle any rule, be it that of the majority, that of the minority, or even that of the individual. There is or should be no disagreement about this point among anarchists. Towards the end of his long militant life, Errico Malatesta, who also confessed the organization of anarchists not only in the unions but also as a separate party, wrote:

«It is known that the anarchists do not recognize the government of the majority *(democracy* , just as they do not recognize the government of a few (*aristocracy, oligarchy,* or class or party dictatorship), and also those of an individual (*autocracy, monarchy* or personal dictatorship) The anarchists have already criticized the so-called government of the majority a thousand times, which incidentally, in practical application, always leads to the rule of a small minority. "(Errico Malatesta, *Scritti,* Vol. III, p. ,

The principle of collective responsibility is implicit in the representative system. If the individual, when the people can delegate their thinking, their will, their function to another individual or to a group of individuals, then what the individuals do in fulfilling that representation obliges those represented. In fact, here, where the representative system has achieved its greatest use, we are living extraordinary manifestations of this sense of collective responsibility. Your child returning from school informs you that "we" [meaning the United States of America] have arrived in the ports of Japan that "we" have never lost a war; The street sweeper assures you that "we" will stay in Germany for at least fifty years or that "we" are the lenders of the whole world, and so on. Of course, the child repeats what it said, and thus the general public of all those who are half dead from starvation and not even a pair of spare shoes, but consider themselves responsible for all that the government and the ruling class of the country are doing and decide to do.

The Russian anarcho-communists who formulated the "Platform" twenty years ago, together with the representative system, adopted the principle of collective responsibility: "The whole Union is responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of each member; and each member is responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the Union "- proclaimed the platform. Malatesta replied that "this is the absolute negation of any individual independence and of any freedom of initiative and action"; and added, "But if the Union is responsible for what each member

does, how can it give the individual members and the various groups the freedom to apply the common program as they see fit? How can one be responsible for an action if one does not have the authority to prevent it? The Union, hence, and the "Executive Committee" for them, would have to monitor the actions of the individual members and dictate what they should do and what they should do; and since the disapproval after the act can not eliminate the previously accepted responsibility, no one could do anything without first obtaining the permission to have the committee's permission. And, conversely, can an individual accept responsibility for the actions of a collectivity before it knows what it is going to do, and it can not prevent it from doing what it disapproves of? "(Errico Malatesta, *Scritti,* Vol III, p. 305).

Here we find ourselves thoroughly in the realm of the absurd, the same absurd, on the basis of which the peoples are obliged to atone, in war and in peace, for all the mistakes and crimes committed by their rulers.

But if we do not want to accept the responsibilities of our representatives, what is their quality as our representatives?

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So the whole question is reduced to understanding whether, first of all, it is possible, and whether it is ultimately appropriate to the goals of anarchist action and propaganda, one's own thinking, one's own will, or any function one takes for one reason or another does not want to directly fulfill, to delegate to others.

The whole anarchist literature is full of arguments and polemics demonstrating the impossibility of it.

In the Anarchist Encyclopedia by Sébastien Faure you can find a definition of the delegation that explains why the representation is an untraceable phoenix.

«The delegate [or representative] - writes Faure - is therefore a person to whom his powers have been delegated and who should act or act not in his own name but in that of his clients. The interests of the delegates must evaporate from those of the groups who have appointed them to perform a commission or any work, and they commit to forget their own personality in order to remember only the organization or the individuals who are theirs Have confidence in them. " *(Encyclopédie Anarchiste,* keyword:" Délégué ").

Now, is it possible that an individual who has been appointed as a representative can annul his personality so far? And, if possible, would it be human to demand that a rational, conscious and free being, in the face of his function as a representative, annul so much that he becomes a robot of the will of others?

If this is impossible, if this is not human, then it can not correspond to the anarchist principles that never demand the impossible and never seek to crush the dignity of man.

Anarchism is by definition the claim to freedom and dignity of the individual. "The negative condition of freedom - writes Bakunin - is this: no one is guilty of any other obedience; it is only free on the condition that all its actions are determined not by the will of others, but by its own will and convictions. "(*Collected Works,* dt. Üb., Berlin 1975, Volume II," Three Lectures before the workers of the valley of St. Imier ", p. 245).

How could the actions of the individual be determined by his own will if he delegates this will to others in matters that affect him?

"As an anarchist," wrote Giuseppe Ciancabilla, "we do not confess to any human being, no matter how much a worthy and meritorious fellow, the mandate to represent the opinions of an absent mass [...]." (*La Protesta Umana,* San Francisco, August 20, 1903). And elsewhere, his newspaper "La Protesta Umana" more explicitly admonished: "An anarchist, in order to remain coherent, can not accept any delegation of groups or groups; the anarchist congresses should not pronounce decisions based on majority or minority [...]. "(La *Protesta Umana,* San Francisco, October 8, 1903).

The word coherence is one of those that distrusts many people as if it were a straitjacket imposed on us from the outside.

But it is in the definition of anarchy itself that every member of society is free, personally, with their own work and thought, to contribute to their and all well-being, without any limitation other than their own abilities and capacities describe.

This means that it can not and should not be able to delegate some tasks to others, which it can fulfill itself, and, conversely, can not and should not imagine that others can or want to do something in its place he himself can not or will not do it himself. The others will act according to their own conscience, not in replacement of his.

"Up to now," writes the Englishman, another theorist of anarchism, "people were only concerned with the sovereignty of the people, but we must reach the sovereignty of the individual." *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Lynn, Mass., September 11, 1909). And the sovereignty of the individual does not mean the right to claim, nor the power to make the illusion that others are acting for us; it merely means that we can do in a direct way what we deem necessary or useful to do, and that others do not have the right or authority to forbid it, on the condition, of course, that the same freedom of Our like is not hurt.

This was what our predecessors said when they proclaimed the need for direct action, which they understood not merely as combat action, but also as propaganda initiatives and activities of any kind developed by the individual in favor of the movement and the ideal.

«Every anarchist is a propagandist - writes S. Faure -; he would suffer if he had to conceal the convictions that animated him, and his greatest joy is to pursue the apostolate of his ideas all around him, on all occasions. " *(Encyclopédie Anarchist,* keyword:" Anarchist ").

And Émile Pouget explained the importance of direct action in an even more complete way when he wrote: "The direct action is the liberation of the masses, until today worked to accept the imposed faith - it is their elevation to insight, to consciousness , It is the call to all to participate in the common work: everyone is invited to no longer be a human nothing - to expect no more salvation from above or from outside: everyone is called upon to lend a hand, - not more passive to endure the social fatalities. The direct action ends the cycle of miracles - miracles of the sky, miracles of the state - and in contrast to the hopes in the "providences" of any kind, she proclaims the implementation of the maxim: salvation lies in us! »*(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Lynn, Mass., September 23, 1910).

In each one of us, of course, because it is axiomatic that the direct action is not a delegated action.

The direct action of the individual is the implicit maxim in all definitions of anarchism.

«What is anarchy?» Asks *Élisée Reclus*. And he answers:

"" A life without master ", both for the society as well as for the individual, a social agreement, which does not result from the authority and from the obedience, from the laws and from the

criminal sanctions, but from the free union of individuals and Groups, according to the needs and interests of all and each. »(Elisée Reclus, *Correspondance,* Vol. III, p. 122).

Kropotkin is no different: "The free individual is the first source of a free society."

In order to "approach communism", socialism "will have to be less based on the principle of representation and more self-government, more government of itself by itself."

"[Our own tactic] - it is still Kropotkin who speaks - consists in developing the greatest possible amount of individual initiative in each group and each individual. The unity of action must result from the unity of purpose and the power of conviction that every idea possesses, when judged free and seriously discussed. "

"This tendency - Kropotkin concludes - puts an end to the overall tactics of the anarchists, as well as the inner life of their groups." (P. Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism,* Engl., Zurich, 1978, pages 138, 139, 142, 143).

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In the anarchist language, collectivities are always regarded only as temporary groupings of free individuals, each thinking and acting on their own, never as abstractions. Review Malatesta from start to finish, and you will always find that he never talks abstractly about groups, committees, congresses, or organizations, but always cares to specify that he intends to speak of the individual individuals who put together those collective bodies and speak and act in their own name.

"We imagine a society - writes Kropotkin - in which relations among its members are no longer governed by laws, no longer by any authority, whether they are elected by the people or hold the power of inheritance ; but by voluntarily entered and at any time resolvable, mutual obligations, as well as by customs and customs, which are well accepted by all. These customs, however, must not be petrified and crystallized by law or superstition; [...] So no authority that imposes its will on others. No government of man over man. [...] Freedom of action left to the individual [...]. Society demands nothing from the individual, for which it has not freely consented at the moment in which it does so,to do it."*(Modern Science and Anarchism)*.

The individual acts, therefore, it does not delegate, it does not mandate the others to act for it.

Paraf-Javal goes even further when he writes: "The revolution will take place only when people no longer delegate powers [...] if they no longer allow other people to say: You have given me the right, to act for you! " *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt., November 14, 1903).

Not only anarchy but the emancipatory revolution itself is only possible for Paraf-Javal when people turn away from the unhealthy habit of delegating their own actions and responsibilities to others, because that's what this delegation is about the authority arises, and the flight from the responsibility, from which results the submission.

"The authority - writes Galleani -, in the popular sense of the word, is the totality of the individuals who are entrusted with the performance of public services." *(La questione sociale,* Paterson, NJ, March 8, 1902).

Whoever chooses to do public service, and you will have created an authority that will use the power you have given it to create privilege conditions for yourself. For your chosen one, acting not on his own initiative and under his responsibility but through your delegation, will be released in advance and supported by you in all his acts, at least until the majority of his constituents do not

irrefutably defend theirs And, consequently, he will be inclined to pass on responsibilities that he would never dare to take on alone.

Michael Bakunin regarded the representative system as essentially bourgeois. Refuting the program of authoritarian socialists, he just says that even after the abolition of private monopolies of wealth, workers must necessarily exercise power "by proxy"; "That is, they entrust people to a group elected to their representation and government, inevitably falling back into all the lies and servitude of the *representation or bourgeois* system." (Op. C *it,* Vol. III, "Letter to the Brussels Liberté ", P. 243).

It is noted that Bakunin speaks of a regime in which the socialization of wealth has already taken place and for which the usual criticism of the system of political representation accepted for the bourgeois regime would not apply. He resolutely opposes the social-communist system, precisely because, even where it would respect the representative system, it does not allow the realization of individual freedom.

"One understands," writes Bakunin, "that at first glance, at least apparently, such a simple organizational plan can be seductive to the imagination of workers who are more eager for equality and justice than for freedom, and who are foolishly foolish, that one and the other can exist without freedom, as if, in order to conquer and consolidate justice and equality, one could rely on others and above all on rulers, no matter how much they consider themselves elected and controlled by the people to like! In reality, for the proletariat, this would be a barrack regime in which the unified mass of workers and workers would awaken, fall asleep, work and live to the beat of the drama [...]. "(*Ibid* ., P. 246).

The people will never be able to control those to whom they have delegated their independence by relinquishing their will and freedom to their decisions.

Elisée Reclus, who understood the anarchy in a harmonious way and expressed her principles with classical simplicity of form, wrote in a letter that circulated in all anarchist propaganda newspapers:

«Voting means to abdicate; To appoint one or more masters for a short or long period is to renounce his own sovereignty. Whether he becomes an absolute monarch, a constitutional prince, or simply a mandator with a small part of kingship, the candidate you raise to the throne or the chair will be your superior. "

"Voting means letting oneself be cheated; - continues Reclus - it means to believe that people like you will suddenly, at the ringing of a bell, gain the virtue of knowing everything and understanding everything. [...]

Voting means summoning betrayal. [...]

So do not hesitate, [...] does not vote! Instead of entrusting your interests to others, she defends herself; instead of taking advocates to propose a future course of action, act!

For people with good will, there is no shortage of opportunities. To shift responsibility for his behavior to other means to lack of courage. "(*Correspondan c e* , Volume II," Lettre à Jean Grave ", pp 364-366).

As you can see, Elisee Reclus does not deal in a special way with voting under capitalist regime for MPs, mayors or judges. On the other hand, he speaks in a general way of the delegation, which he considers in all circumstances to be an abdication, a stupidity and a cowardice.

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But then, one will say, how could anarchist society work tomorrow, how can the anarchist movement even work today, where should newspapers and propaganda brochures be published, where should committees be assisted and so many other initiatives, where should, finally From time to time, companions who live in the provinces and in the most diverse and far-off states, meet each other, talk to each other, communicate about the common action, and not everyone can go to the meeting, both for reasons of time, as well as the place and the means?

As far as the newspapers are concerned, the practice has virtually solved the problem automatically. Whoever writes, can and must only write as he thinks, if he wrote what others think, he would obviously be a dishonest and a dishonest person. Unfortunately, there have also been delegated newspaper editors, but they have always had little success and, moreover, the delegation has always been rather nominal rather than effective, and in general the greatest harm that came from making an ineffective pretense believable.

But where the delegation to editorial office of a newspaper that calls itself anarchist would be effective, where the pretense would take effect, the damage to the seriousness and future of the anarchist movement could be very great. Because, presumptuous to speak for their clients, the editorship would speak in reality only for themselves or, worse, for a small camarilla of wheelers, thus falsifying their own thinking and that of others.

As far as the committees for assistance, agitation, action, or initiatives of any kind are concerned, they are generally viewed by the Companions - and in reality they function - as groups of willing people who deserve the solidarity and cooperation of the other Companions as long as they develop a work that is considered useful or necessary or correct, and otherwise left to those who disagree. For insofar as they are considered to be representative bodies of a local or regional movement, they become institutions subject to the general rules of democratic politics, the target of more or less artificial majorities or minorities, necessarily hampered in their work of internal disagreements .which embitter the minds and turn them away from the action: both the willing, who no longer feel free to act according to their own conscience, and the generality of the companions who, considering themselves represented, leave the work to the alleged representatives, which connected with the various initiatives that they could have taken.

The direct action of the militants is, we always remember, the indispensable condition for the existence of a real and fruitful anarchist movement. And the freedom of action of everyone and everyone is their indispensable impetus - always set that the freedom of the one does not intervene in the same freedom of others.

As far as the congresses and assemblies are concerned, the question of the representative system has been posed to the Companions since the beginning of the anarchist movement, as a theoretical and practical movement, within the First International.

"But as soon as the Absolute does not exist - wrote Bakunin in 1872 - there can be no infallible dogma for the International, and consequently no official economic or political theory, and our congresses must never claim the role of ecumenical councils proclaiming principles that obligatory for all members and for all believers. " *(Op. C it.,* Vol. III," Letter to the Brussels Liberté, "p. 222).

The newspaper "La Révolte", in which the most famous militants of the first generation of the anarchist movement cooperated, wrote in this respect since 1891:

"The big hurdle the anarchist gatherings have always encountered is knowing whether delegates should be there or not. Going all out is impossible, that would cost too much. To nominate delegates

would not be anarchist. So one has preferred to do nothing while it would have been so easy to assist in equipping a companion to make the journey.

We understand very well the anxiety that inspired the delegations. It is the fear of congresses that mimic the parliamentarians, the fear of decisions imposed by *a center* . But once one does not allow any center, and does not accept decisions of any kind except when appropriated, these gatherings could be seen as simply opportunities to exchange ideas. In this case, the companion who was paid for the trip by fundraising is not a lawmaker, but a companion who simply went to see other companions to bring back a mouthful of fresh air from their contact. "

"This, of course," concluded La Révolte, "if there really is something to discuss, any point that requires communication." (La *Révolte,* Paris, April *11-17* 1891).

That is, in fact, what happens every time an individual goes to such a meeting or congress, whether it is anarchist or not. The only difference between a delegate and someone who only claims to represent himself is probably that the former, as it has to appear to those who have chosen and helped him, for the expenses of travel and to resign at the place of the meeting, to carry something back, to be forced to put into the best possible light the activity which he himself carried out in order to strengthen in his clients - or voters - the illusion that he has been adequately represented; while the second one, the one who, with the help of others, could go to the congregation,with no pretension other than to defend oneself, as he has no illusion to uphold, he will not be tempted to add anything to the truth of what happened.

In 1904, on the occasion of the World Fair of Saint Louis, Missouri, the Companions of this city commemorated convening a meeting in which all the companions of the United States, and other countries, who had gone to Saint Louis, had gathered to meet Visit exhibition. The editors of Paterson's "La Questione Sociale" newspaper suggested that to give the matter a greater importance, "the companions who will attend the meeting will, of course, represent themselves, as well as representatives of groups, circles Cores and other institutions [...], otherwise the meeting would run the risk of collapsing into a brief summit of four fate beneficiaries who may be excellent representatives of the anarchist ideal, as well as ... the opposite ».

The companion Galleani raised objections in the "Cronaca Sovversiva," and there arose a rather heated polemic regarding the *honorable anarchist*.

"The delegations of will, energy and thought - Galleani wrote - are absurd and usurping when it comes to socialist candidates, but logical and rehabilitated (according to the" Questione Sociale "), when it comes to the use of anarchist candidates at the meeting of Saint Louis should be modernized. "(*Cronaca So vv ersiva,* Barre, Vt June 11, 1904).

"Our actions - used Galleani at that time - are not *necessarily* anarchist because we who commit them are anarchists (no one would profess the property as an anarchist the moment he pays the taxes, rent or fines) but conversely, we are the more anarchists the more our actions and our behavior conform to our ideal. "

"A group, a nucleus, a circle that agrees on the solution to a given problem, on the other hand, splits over certain others into two, three, several subgroups. Will the delegate at the meeting represent the will of the minority, the majority, the second or the third group?

And how many and by what groups will the *decision-making* body reflect in its decisions? And how many groups will not even find a distant echo of their thinking and views in these decisions?

Do you have to - say Galleani - repeat all the criticisms that anarchism has for half a century invalidated the parliamentary system, concluding that no delegation of will, energy and thought is transferable? »

"La Questione Sociale" replied that it was not about willpower, energy or thinking, but simply delegating functions.

"Our heartiest mistrust," answered Galleani.

"It has always started like that. Twenty years ago, Andrea Costa and then Musini accepted him, and Maffei later, from Romagna, Parma and Emilia voters, accepted the mandate to take the rebellious protests of the country's disinherited to Parliament with the explicit and renewed resolution any involvement in the vote to abstain from any participation in the legislative work of the Parliament.

It was, under these circumstances, not a delegation of powers, it was a simple, harmless delegation of functions ...

Where did you end?

The companions of Italy know that, educated by the experience, even in times of greater reaction, violently rebelled against the protest candidacies of Palla, Galleani, Malatesta or Schicchi, candidacies that are neither a delegation of powers "were still a delegation of functions, but under the impulsive naivety of feeling they concealed error and contradiction." *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt., June 25, 1904).

And, as the polemic over the honorable anarchist had heated up, Galleani categorically reiterated that the delegation's supporters "[...] in the name of the masses they want to cheat with a delegation, in spite of which they only represent themselves" *(Cronaca Sovversiva ,* , make themselves heralds of representative system Barre, Vt., August 27, 1904).

Does this mean that the action must be paralyzed, that no meetings should be held, that outside the representative system there can only be the absolutism of the impositions?

Not at all.

"The spontaneous agreement of the criteria, the judgments, the proposals by which the most daring initiatives translate into victorious reality - wrote Galleani - is always possible, but on the condition that the energies and will of each are free of any compromise and compromise to stay away from any humiliation. »

And he declared: "Any more complex and bold initiative can find its realization without any diminution in the free and spontaneous cooperation of all those who agree with its usefulness and effectiveness [...]." *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt , September 10, 1904).

"I have seen so far that all companions who have deepened the study of any specific aspects of the social problem have always found a way among the Companions to discover the results of their investigations and their studies in a newspaper, in a leaflet or on a paper Make a meeting public.

If Errico Malatesta, who has never been favored by fate, would have had to spread the miraculous didactic of his "Fra Contadini" [among farmworkers] at his own expense, the manuscript would still be on the bottom of his suitcase. Likewise, if I were to go to the Saint Louis meeting or any propaganda gathering, for which time and money is needed, I would not move out of the house, for all eternity. But I am sure that when I ask a group of companions for a means to say something in a

booklet, a rally, a meeting, something to help develop, orient, or effectively affirm common ideas can find abundantly the means or the resources that are indispensable for the enterprise.

Does all this involve a delegation, a representation, a mandate?

Not even the shadow of it! I'll just *my ideas* set out to defend, represent, no matter what the ideas of the companions who puts me in a position to publish and disseminate them. " *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt., July 9, 1904).

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On the issue of the congresses wrote the fellow Antonio Cavallazzi, who was for more than a decade the most zealous and most active collaborator of Galleani in the "Cronaca Sovversiva", in 1905, on the occasion of a proposal for an International Congress, made by the Workers' Foundation Argentina has been:

"For us an anarchist congress - let us use this word of common usage - may not be attended by individuals who have a special representation, a function. A person can not assign others his or her representation without renouncing part of his or her personality, or receive representation without having a bourgeois supremacy over those who entrust him with this representation.

On the other hand, it is absurd to delegate an individual to attend a meeting to discuss certain issues, and to impose on him to champion a predetermined order of ideas. This approach would inevitably render the meeting useless, because, as opinions are thus made in advance, the discussion that would ensue is almost superfluous. "Thus, according to Cavallizzi, the representative system is incompatible with anarchist principles, and" in order to have a genuinely libertarian and effective character, "a congress" must be attended by free individuals exposed to any mandate, any official representation of a group or a circle, of individuals having ideas to discuss, questions to debateto reveal their intrinsic efficacy. »*(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt., September 30th

1905).

For Galleani, the representative system was one of the fundamental reasons why he considered the federation of anarchists in a formal organism impossible.

In 1908, when fellows from New York proposed to organize all of the United States resident anarchists in a federation, Galleani wrote that experience teaches that "the scattered efforts and energies are spontaneously and vigorously spurred on by the spur of the moment Need and the Demands of Combat Come together and coordinate until they triumph over the most cunning enemy, over his darkest ambushes, over his most perfidious pitfalls [...].

The Federation presupposes, by definition, two framework conditions which, in defiance of all assurances of independence and autonomy given to us by the proposers, destroy the qualifying "anarchy" to which, in the given case, the delegation and the centralization wants to join what is the same as say: parliamentarism and government. Have the Companions of New York contemplated the strange situation they face their opponents and the contradiction that they would establish inextricably between their actions and their words?

We have fought this far in the electoral and parliamentary action of the Socialists this delegation of functions, including the first and most fateful of all forms of renunciation, which is the negation of direct action and the extinction of any initiative [...]. " *(Cronaca Sovversiva,* Barre, Vt., January 18, 1908).

The quotations could be endlessly continued to invariably come to the logical conclusion that the representative system is incompatible not only with the anarchist principles of individual freedom but also with the most elemental concepts of honesty, sincerity, and truth.

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The idea of political representation in short implies the need for a generic mandate, which in common law applies only to minors and the incapacitated, to all those who, being mentally impaired, are incapable of personal responsibility and placed under guardianship. The representative system is truly the mechanism by which the sovereign people are disempowered with their own consent and placed under the tutelage of the privileged classes.

The anarchists advocate that the adult has reached maturity and therefore must emancipate himself from all guardianship, no matter how, and act according to his own free conscience and personal responsibility. The representative system preserves all its deficiencies just as much when applied by anarchists as where it is used by others. Malatesta says quite literally that, "given the conditions under which anarchists live and fight, their congresses are even less truly representative than the bourgeois parliaments themselves, and their control of the executive organs, if they have authoritarian powers, hardly prompt and effective. "(*Scritti* , Vol. III, p. 306).

The anarchist, both when acting individually and when acting in the group, does nothing except what his conscience suggests, and that is why he is an anarchist insofar as he has his law in himself. He does not seek the authorization of others for what he does, nor does he claim that others act for him. If his work is good, it will be approved and imitated. If it is bad, it will be disapproved, and he himself may be able to see his mistakes.

Clear instructions on how to realize the new social ideas without resorting to the mystifications of the representative system are given by the forerunners of socialism itself. Ever since the first half of the last century, Victor Considérant, a student of Fourier, has written that Two ways are open for any idea to be realized: the legislative path, that is, the path of power which the anarchists reject, and the *scientific one*Way, which - says Considérant - «consists in the ability now belonging to the followers of each of the socialist ideas, to freely provide for their dissemination in the minds by means of discourse and discussion, and to join together in order to put them into practice, and that's just *to make the experience* of their systems *before society*.The progress of science, as far as I know, has never been decreed by the law. They are always, and they will always be the product of the self-activity of the scientists, their studies, their discussions, and ultimately their experiments. The path that has served and will always serve the advancement of all other sciences will necessarily become that of social science as soon as the various socialisms, if they can no longer be *political parties* in competition for governing power, will only compete with schools the free conquest of the intelligences are. »

In our days, the same thought is presented by fellow Luigi Bertoni in an article by him on the word *Élection,* in the Encyclopédie Anarchist. Bertoni says:

"The anarchic solution, which obviously presupposes, first of all, the end of the juxtaposition between private interests and public interest, through an order of things in which everyone, while seeking his particular well-being, contributes to the general well-being, will be to apply it in the social sphere What is done in the scientific field. All those who indulge in a particular science pursue their discoveries and applications through free research and experimentation, always aiming for new perfection. Once realized, there is no need for police force to enforce it. Everybody is in a hurry to use them for their part and at the same time make any improvements.Through this method, humanity has already made wonderful progress without any need to make elections. Everybody has chosen himself, through his intelligence, his devotion and his work, through a sometimes stubborn

fight against ancient prejudices or unfair interests. The administration of the public cause, in all its manifold parts, is itself a science question. [And] elections do not have anything scientific [...]. »itself is also a science question. [And] elections do not have anything scientific [...]. »itself is also a science question. [And] elections do not have anything scientific [...]. »

The scientific method is not conjured up here as a talisman, which at any time ready and infallibly has the definitive solution to all social problems.

No, it is understood as the practical and concrete method par excellence, confirmed by experience as the most productive of results, always incomplete - for the definitive solutions are not always perfect.

It is understood as a possibility for anyone, individual or group, who believe that they can solve any problem for the benefit of themselves and others, freely to have the practical experience of determining, on the basis of the results, whether this solution is good or not.

The problems of physics, chemistry and every other branch of science are solved in this way.

However, in social science, as in all others, one must have complete freedom of research and experimentation. It is necessary, furthermore, to possess the necessary means to carry out those investigations and those experiments.

Freedom and means completely closed to the pioneers of social progress by the *dogma* of authority and by the fetish of property, as the exclusive monopoly of the individual or the state.

State authority still denies sociologists - as they once denied physicists - the freedom to experiment, capable of demonstrating the absurdity of their laws and their institutions. The special monopoly of social wealth denies them the means to do so.

But in their groups and their circles in which their consciousness manifests, the anarchists have emancipated themselves from the tyranny of the dogma of authority and the fetish of private property. In the limited environment of their individual and collective action, they are free of any authority and driven by convictions, not interests. They are, therefore, in conditions which allow them - in their relations - to apply the scientific method of investigation and experimentation, which allows them to find those solutions that best fit the anarchist principles and, consequently, for theirs Movement are the most advantageous.

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As long as the order based on the privilege of wealth and power continues, the application of the scientific method to the administration of the public cause is impossible. Because in societies that are based on the privilege of a few, there is not really a public cause that could manage the many disinherited. All wealth and all power are the monopoly of a privileged minority, which it manages on behalf of the public, but, in reality, solely in its own interest.

Under such conditions, the representative system does not realize either the sovereignty of the people or the freedom of the individual. All humanity is placed under the guardianship of the rich and the powerful, and the popular elections have value only insofar as they sanction this state of guardianship. Where the disinherited and oppressed crowd seeks to rebel against it, all the resources of power and wealth are set in motion to push them back into submission.

In the evolution of political forms, the representative system for the disinherited crowds is not an effective advance. The real accomplishment of the political revolution is the formulation of the

principle of popular sovereignty, which establishes the origins of power from heaven to earth convict and establish that people are the sole creators of their destiny. But the representative system does not realize this principle, it falsifies it, it corrupts it and it betrays it. The representative system gives people, as proclaimed authors of their own fate, no other power than to delegate their fate to the privileged classes that govern and exploit them.

The principle of popular sovereignty can achieve its realization solely and solely in the complete freedom of the individual. Therefore, those who set themselves the goal of impelling the further advances of civilization are required to work to ensure that this unrealized principle becomes a living and effective reality. And that is especially the task of the anarchists who are in the field of social progress and claim to be what the true scientists are in the field of knowledge, study and inquiry: the pioneers, the tireless investigators of the truth.

History knows no alternative to the representative system generalized by bourgeois democracy except in auto-political and oligarchical absolutism. The social science is still in its infancy and the delays are understandable. Perhaps it is inevitable that from time to time, even in the anarchist movement, there will be an attempt to introduce the representative system, and consequently the need to repeat the demonstration of the impossibility, which has been made for decades by our predecessors, the To reconcile illusions and the delusions of this system with the principles of anarchy.

But we have to fight back against such attempts. We must have the courage to embark on the new paths indicated by the ideal and illuminated by reason confirmed by experience.

We are crier of a new idea of social coexistence, of an idea which violently violates inherited prejudices, the inertia of minds blunted by ignorance and deprivation, and, above all, the interests entrenched by economic and political privilege.

Faced with the need to spread our ideas to people and peoples, in the face of the need to defend them from the pitfalls and attacks of infinite enemies, we are required to seek new, unexplored, unknown paths. Like the explorer who penetrates into the jungle, we must open these paths to ourselves and the others, with the effort of thought, muscle, and will, assuring ourselves at every step, not to stray from the course.

The idea is our only compass, and if the idea warns us that we have gone astray, then we must set ourselves back in the right direction.

If we return to the application of the representative system - invented by cunning tyrants in the Middle Ages to strengthen their tyranny over their ignorant subjects - we would be on a wrong path that can not lead to anarchy, as it is a pretense, a deception Embarrassment and deception that have served very well the authority and serve, but never the cause of freedom, solidarity and human emancipation will be able to serve.